

2-06-03

Local Boundary Commission  
State of Alaska  
550 West 7th Avenue, Alaska 99051

Dear Commissioners:

There's now way we in Kasaan can pay borough taxes, since there is simply not enough of a local economy to support local taxation. Kasaan nearly died as a village, in the late 1950s, when the fish canning industry could no longer survive, and our local plant was forced to permanently close its doors. For the last 50 years, Kasaan has been struggling to survive, and is desperately trying to rebuild it's local economy, and having to pay property taxes would be the death knell for us here. Also, to lose one's home when the borough siezes it to satisfy back taxes is a real tragedy, especially for those already suffering from economic hardship. To have to sacrifice one's home, part or all of one's children's college fund, one's pension, one's family heirlooms, to the gaping and greedy mouth of a borough is a travesty of justice! We do not need to have such a gargantuan, voracious and callous form of government on this island! There are alternate forms of fund raising available to us who choose to live outside of boroughs, such as a head tax to pay for school costs, and those who cannot pay can receive exemptions, if they can show they are indeed living in poverty, by providing copies of their income tax returns.

Please calculate what your commission feels would be a fair share for those communities to pay apiece, and establish a percapita dollar amount that would help cover the State's educational cost burden. I calculate that, based on 2,660 jobs ( and paychecks ) on Prince of Wales Island per wage or dividend earner paid \$200.00 apiece in head taxes to a unified island school district, about \$532, 000.00 per year could be raised to help pay education costs, and if \$400.00 per year were charged per wage earner, \$1,064,000.00 per year could be raised to cover these costs. My question is this: how much does the state actually require to cover this shortfall, how much can each proposed borough in Alaska raise to cover via borough property taxes, and how much from the proposed head tax to cover education costs in the unorganized boroughs throughout Alaska? The Ketchikan Gateway Borough itself, on it's web pages says that property taxes are the most difficult to collect, of all of the taxes in place. If head taxes from all communities not in boroughs were automatically deducted from payroll checks, and pro rated by the month or week, or in one lump sum from our Permanent Fund Dividends checks, it would not be very difficult to pay, and would not create hardship for workers. Monthly payroll deductions at the rate of \$33.33 per month comes to slightly \$1.00 per day, which is nothing, for those with steady jobs. If those with good jobs here can afford beer, soda, chips, cable TV, and steak dinners at nice restaurants, they can certainly afford school taxes!

The prime responsibility for paying for the schooling of Native students falls to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, not with the State of Alaska, so why is that not happening? I think the State should hand that responsibility back to the BIA, and let our local tribes run our schools in t he Native villages, using partly BIA funding and partly State funding, perhaps organizing our own tribal school district here, on the island. Thank you,



Della A. Coburn  
Kasaan resident and property owner